

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A guide tube for a flexible pipe (40) for transporting hydrocarbons and ~~designed for mounting~~ mountable substantially vertically on an offshore installation to allow connection of said flexible pipe (40) to said offshore installation, said guide tube comprising

a lower tubular element (10) having a substantially rectilinear section (12) extending along an axis (A) ~~and said lower tubular element being~~ extended by a free section (14) having a curvature along its length, said free section (14) having an inner wall (38) internal to the curvature against which said flexible pipe (40) is fitted so the pipe is as to be entrained in friction when entrained through said guide tube, and said rectilinear section (12) comprising an eccentric guide ~~means~~ (18) for guiding said flexible pipe (40) in order to hold ~~[[it]]~~ said flexible pipe away from said axis (A) in an opposite direction from said curvature of said free section so as to keep said pipe (40) away from said internal inner wall (38);

~~characterized in that~~ said eccentric guide ~~means~~ (18) ~~comprise~~ comprises an insert forming a ring, said insert having an inner perimeter that is eccentric relative to ~~the~~ an outer perimeter thereof.

2. (Currently Amended) The guide tube as claimed in claim 1, wherein ~~characterized in that~~ said substantially rectilinear section (12) has a flange against which said eccentric guide ~~means~~ (18) fit fits in order to hold said guide ~~be held~~ in a bearing relationship.

3. (Currently Amended) The guide tube as claimed in claim 2, further comprising a collar operable for holding ~~characterized in that~~ said eccentric guide ~~means~~ (18) ~~are adapted so as to be held~~ in a bearing relationship against said flange, and the ~~by a~~ collar (20) forming a clamp for clamping said guide.

4. (Currently Amended) The guide tube as claimed in ~~any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that~~ claim 1, wherein said eccentric guide ~~means (18) are made from steel and have~~ has a surface with a low friction coefficient in contact with said flexible pipe.

5. (Currently Amended) The guide tube as claimed in claim 1, further comprising ~~any one of claims 1 to 4, characterized in that it also comprises~~ at least one upper tubular element ~~(46)~~ spaced from said lower tubular element ~~(10)~~, opposite said free section ~~(14)~~ and arranged coaxially relative to said substantially rectilinear section ~~(12)~~.

6. (Currently Amended) In combination, a guide tube as claimed in claim 1 with a flexible pipe for transporting hydrocarbons and designed to be entrained in the ~~the~~ [[a]] guide tube, ~~as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that it comprises~~ radial ~~designed~~ guides positioned and operable to guide the pipe ~~[[it]]~~ through said lower tubular element.

7. (Currently Amended) The flexible pipe combination as claimed in claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein said radial guides ~~guide means~~ comprise biconical sleeves spaced apart along said flexible pipe by a distance shorter than ~~the~~ a length of said tubular element.

8. (New) The guide tube of claim 4, wherein said eccentric guide is made of steel.